A KENYA RECORD OF THE BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *OENANTHE HISPANICA*

On 23 March 1984 an unusually marked male wheatear *Oenanthe* sp. was noticed by DJP at Athi River (1.25S, 36.58E), Kenya, perching on small dead bushes and posts 1-2 m high, and dropping down frequently to feed on the rather rocky open ground. The bird was quite shy, but was approached several times to within 25 m, and was viewed through binoculars in company with a male Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe*, and with a male Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, which it chased and drove off. It was similar in size and habits to the Pied Wheatear, but differed in having the throat white, and the mantle and back pale, uniform with the cap and hindneck. The whole underparts were white apart from a faint buff wash across the breast. The upperparts from forehead to back were buffish-white, marked with greyish-brown. Except for a black centre, the tail was white practically to its tip, but with black extending noticeably up the distal edge of the outer feather (Fig. 1d). The axillaries and underwing coverts were black. The legs were smaller and thinner than those of the accompanying Northern Wheatear, and the grating call resembled that of a Pied Wheatear. However, the rare white-throated form of the Pied Wheatear appeared to be ruled out by the wholly pale upperparts (a black face mask was well separated from blackish wings and scapulars), and the bird was identified as a Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica*.

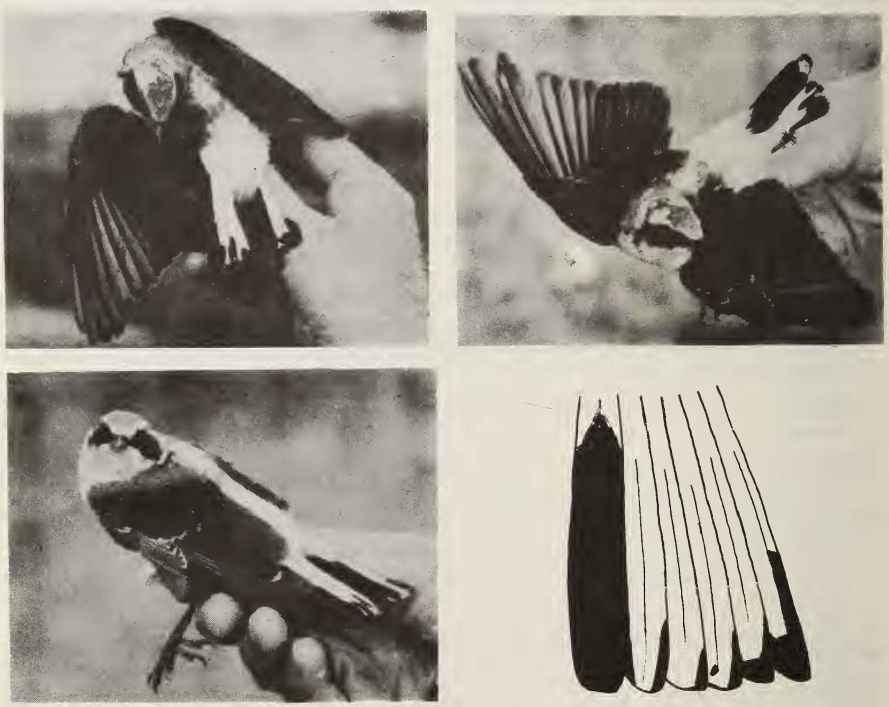

Fig. 1. *Male Black-eared Wheatear* Oenanthe hispanica, *Athi River, 25 March 1984. 1a - 1c: from Ektachrome transparencies by DKR; 1d: half tail by DJP*

The bird remained at the same site until at least 5 April, and it was caught, ringed and photographed (Fig. 1a-c) by DB and DKR on 25 March. In the hand the mantle and back feathers were seen to be white basally, tinged beigy-grey distally, and with extensive greyish-brown tipping remaining - especially on the crown and sides of the mantle (Fig. 1a-c). The black face mask extended over the base of the upper mandible, but in a band no more than 1 mm wide. The flight feathers, upper wing coverts, tertials and scapulars were blackish-brown, with small buff tips remaining on the primary and greater coverts, alula, secondaries and some lesser coverts, indicating that the bird was in its first year. The distal two thirds of the centre tail feather was black. Black was continuous across the tips of the outer two feathers and extended for 24 mm up the outer web of the outermost. It was confined, however, to narrow marks on the inner and outer corners of the second from centre feather, and on the outer corners alone of the third and fourth feathers, so that medially the second to fourth pairs of feathers were white to their tips (Fig. 1d). Measurements (mm) were: wing 93: P3 longest; P2 -5; P4 -½; P5 -2; P6 -7; P1, 3>primary coverts. The bird weighed only 18 g when caught and carried little visible subcutaneous fat.

The whitish underlying colour of the upperparts and the practically white underparts would indicate that the bird was of the eastern race *O. h. melanoleuca*. This, as far as we are aware, is the first properly documented occurrence of this species in East Africa.

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RECENT COASTAL RECORDS OF THE WHITE-STARRED FOREST ROBIN *POGONOCICHLA STELLATA* IN TANZANIA

The White-starred Forest Robin ranges from the Cape Province of South Africa to isolated montane populations in northern East Africa (Oatley 1982a). Apart from coastal forests south of the Tropic of Capricorn it is basically a highland species. Records from below 1000 m in the East Usambaras and a single one from 300 m in the Pugu Hills were presumed to have been wanders (White 1962), although Stuart & Jensen (1981) gave several records from inland eastern Tanzanian forests below 500 m. Records from Mrima Hill (Britton, Britton & Coverdale 1980) during August and September included spotted immature birds. This local breeding population was assumed to have been sedentary.

During an ongoing study in the Pugu Hills (6.53S, 39.06E) near Dar es Salaam several additional records have been obtained. Observations include adults on 19 September 1981 and 11 September 1982 and two spotted juveniles around an ant swarm on 3 October 1981. Two adults were netted on 17 July 1983 and single juveniles netted on 21 August 1982 and 11 September 1983. Full mensural data are available for netted birds. Netting and regular visits by several birdwatchers in every month of the year since June 1981 have failed to reveal Forest Robins from November through to June. It is therefore suggested that the species is a scarce migrant breeder to the area.

In coastal Natal, Forest Robins do not occur during the wet months (Oatley 1982b). The rains around Dar es Salaam are concentrated from November to May, indicating a similar situation. From breeding data obtained in South Africa (Oatley 1982c) it seems likely that egg-laying in the Pugu Hills occurred in July.

These birds were not assigned to any race but *P. s. orientalis* is the most